

# CONNECTICUT RIVER ATLANTIC SALMON COMMISSION

## Connecticut River

# Blueback Herring

*The Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission and its member agencies are working with partners to restore Atlantic salmon, American shad, and other migratory fish to the Connecticut River basin through fisheries management including hatchery production and release of salmon, harvest management, habitat restoration, fishway construction, dam removal, research and public education.*



CONNECTICUT RIVER  
ATLANTIC SALMON  
COMMISSION

103 East Plumtree Road  
Sunderland, Massachusetts  
01375

Phone: 413-548-9138

Fax: 413-548-9622

Email: Jan\_Rowan@fws.gov



### Blueback Herring Trivia

- (1) When you open a can of sardines, you will find: (a) blueback herring (b) Atlantic herring (c) alewife (d) all of the above
- (2) Average herring lifespan is: (a) 3-5 years (b) 7-8 years (c) 12-15 years (d) 18-20 years
- (3) Herring eggs will: (a) stick like glue (b) roll off like water (c) slime you (d) bounce
- (4) Herring are an important part of the food web because they: (a) eat salmon (b) are food for striped bass (c) are high in Vitamin D (d) scare away seals

Trivia Question Answers: (1) b (2) b (3) a (4) b



Mary Steube Fishway in Old Lyme, CT

## Herring Facts: Did You Know?

- Adult herring return to spawn in the Connecticut River in mid to late-May when the river temperature is around 58°F, a week or two behind the shad run;
- About twice as many males return to the river as females and they return to the river before females;
- Males are smaller than females and mature at age 3-4 while females mature a year later;
- Herring spawn in mid-June when the temperature is above 70°F;
- Most herring spawn more than once in successive years and some have spawned up to 5 times;
- An average sized female produces about 200,000 miniscule golden-colored eggs that hatch into larvae;
- The juveniles are about 3 inches long in August and September when they migrate to the ocean;
- Adult herring average 8 inches in length;

Alewife are a second type of herring. Compared to blueback herring, alewife have larger eyes, a blue-green back, more scales along the side of the body and a gray-lining of the stomach. They also tend to migrate back to the river earlier and they prefer the lower river.



Alewife

The most herring ever recorded at the Holyoke fish lift is 630,000 in 1985.

### Status of Herring

- Herring have been used historically as bait for striped bass, bluefish and lobster but the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection made it illegal to take herring from Connecticut River tributaries in 2000 because of dwindling numbers.
- Herring numbers have dropped dramatically since 1985. Restoration efforts include construction of fishways to provide them with access to historic spawning and nursery habitat and transfer of herring from downstream habitat to vacant historic habitat upstream;

### Herring Geography

- Herring are found in the Atlantic Ocean from Nova Scotia to Florida;
- They have been found as far north in the Connecticut River as Bellows Falls, VT but usually are not seen in large numbers above the Vernon dam;

To find out how many herring have returned to the Connecticut River, call the Fish Hotline: 413-548-9628